

The department has allocated \$165,000 for 1991-93 to cleanup illegal dump sites. This is a small portion of what is needed in the state (i.e., the South Puget Sound region alone has estimated it could cost this amount to cleanup sites in that region).

Other closures are for different reasons. The state Department of Wildlife, for instance, has requested that the department close some areas for short time periods to protect the nesting areas of certain endangered species. The department may also close roads for safety, maintenance and other related reasons.

Comparison of Alternatives and Environmental Impacts

The **preferred policy** (generally the same as current policy) provides public access to state forest lands, but there is more emphasis in the preferred policy on restricting access to prevent problems. The policy provides the opportunity for road closures or other measures as management tools to manage public use. This policy will allow the department to provide for multiple use and still deal with unlawful forest activities such as garbage dumping, vandalism, recreation activities outside designated areas, theft and damage to stream beds and other resources.

With the new policy, the department will be better able to efficiently manage state forest lands. By using a variety of tools, including education, restrictions on vehicular access or road closures, the department hopes it can protect public resources that are at risk.

Alternative 1 would allow the department to close, restrict or limit the use of roads. This policy would reduce trespass, maintenance costs, liability/risk exposure and environmental impacts. It would, however, reduce the opportunities for outdoor recreation through multiple use.

Alternative 2 would create the most recreation opportunities for the public, provided funds were available for maintenance. Because these funds are not currently available, the department believes that the lack of restrictions on public use could cause serious environmental damage and in some areas, put public safety at risk.

Alternative 3, the no-policy option, would allow each of the department's region to set its own policies and procedures. Inconsistent practices between different regions or within the same region are likely to occur, causing confusion in the public's mind and possibly exacerbating problems of vandalism and destruction of natural resources on state forest land. Some areas of the state would be open to users at all times while other areas would be closed.

Policy No. 26: Granting Public Rights of Way

The preferred policy states:

**The department will grant rights of way to individuals, corporations or public entities when there is an opportunity for enhancing trust assets and when any detriments are offset.
(current policy)**

Two alternatives were considered by the department.

Alternative 1: The department will grant rights of way only for forest management purposes or to applicants with eminent domain authority.

Alternative 2, the no-policy option, would allow the department to grant only those rights of way specifically mentioned in statute. These rights of way do not include domestic use easements, term utility easements or reciprocity with other landowners.

Background

The department receives several hundred applications per year, many from timber companies, for rights of way across state forest land. In fiscal year 1990, for instance, the department processed 252 applications for rights of way, 49 road easements and 147 road-use permits.

Comparison of Alternatives and Environmental Impacts

The **preferred policy** (current policy) enables the department to grant rights of way that enhance forest assets and mitigate adverse impacts.

This policy also enables the department to retain its reciprocal granting policies with industry while adhering to the Multiple Use Act. The preferred policy also gives the department the ability to continue to allowing county road, utility and domestic use access on state land where and when possible.

As a general rule, the fewer rights of way permits approved by the department, the less impact there will be on state forest land. Under the preferred policy, the department will consider the environmental impacts of proposed rights of way and will assess whether the trusts benefit by these agreements. The department will attempt to use existing roads rather than build separate access roads for each applicant.

Alternative 1 would allow the department to grant rights of way to public agencies or to private individuals or companies that manage their lands for timber production. It would limit access quite severely and would have more of a social than an environmental impact because the department would not grant easements for recreation or development purposes.

Alternative 2, the no-policy option, would allow the department to meet the minimum legal requirements of statute but not issue additional rights of way.

Policy No. 27: Acquiring Rights of Way

The preferred policy states:

The department will acquire rights of way across private or other public lands to department-managed forest land when this access is needed to increase the value of trust assets or for management purposes. The department will acquire these rights of way by gift, purchase, exchange, condemnation or road use agreement. Permanent, public access rights are preferred. (current policy)

Three alternatives were considered by the department.

Alternative 1: The department will obtain rights of way access only when benefits exceed costs. The department will conduct an economic analysis (including the cost of obtaining rights of way) to determine the net income potential of each parcel of trust ownership. The decision to acquire the rights of way will be based on this calculation.

Alternative 2: The department will attempt to obtain public use rights of way to all state forest land. The department will seek rights of way that permit public access and management practices on all forest lands.

Alternative 3, the no-policy option, would allow the department not to acquire additional rights of way, unless it was required to do so by specific statute.

Background

In order to acquire better access to state forest land, the department obtained 53 rights of way easements from private and public owners in 1990, equivalent to about 40 miles. Since 1982, the department has acquired rights of way totalling approximately 706 miles.

Comparison of Alternatives and Environmental Impacts

The **preferred policy** (current policy) has two main features.

First, it recognizes the continuing need to acquire access to all department-managed forest lands. Access almost always improves the value of state forest land. Whether valuable materials are removed from the land or it is sold or exchanged for other lands, trust assets are enhanced by obtaining these access rights. Rights of way acquisitions should take long-term, economic benefits into consideration, yet set priorities to meet short-term needs.

Second, access for "management purposes" includes a wide range of department activity, including recreation. Acquired access may include roads, trails, drainage and other agreements necessary to realize the multiple uses of state forest lands.

The **preferred policy** allows the department to balance economic considerations with other objectives of the plan, including environmental factors. The policy will help establish consistency and statewide priorities for acquiring rights of way.

Alternative 1 is a change from current policy. The decision to acquire rights of way would be based solely on economic considerations (not environmental factors). Access would be acquired only when it is economically beneficial to do so for the trusts. The financial benefit, in present value terms, must exceed the cost of making the acquisition. This option limits the acquisition of access to those activities that result in revenue for the trusts. By definition, this would exclude trail, road, utility and other access that serve public recreation interests. This alternative therefore establishes a narrow view of public access to state forest lands.

Alternative 2 increases public access to state forest lands. Under this alternative, the department would initiate an aggressive program to identify and acquire these rights of way. The decision to acquire access would be based on social benefits rather than the economic benefits derived from use of the land. Access would be acquired to meet all commercial and public access uses, including roads, trails, utilities and others. The department will face increased costs as road standards and maintenance costs rise to accommodate increased public use. The department expects that increased environmental damage may result from this option.

Alternative 3, the no-policy option, could lead to an inconsistent approach. The decision to acquire rights of way would likely be driven by short-range planning and economic conditions and may differ between administrative regions.

Policy No. 28: Developing and Maintaining Roads

The preferred policy states:

The department will develop and maintain a road system which integrates management needs and controls effects on the forest environment. (current policy)

Three other alternatives were considered by the department.

Alternative 1: The department will build only least-cost roads that are necessary for generating short and long-term returns from forest assets.

Alternative 2: The department will develop a transportation system necessary to generate short-term returns from forest assets.

Alternative 3, the no-policy option, would allow the department to comply with the Forest Practices Act and regulations, but the department would not exceed the minimum legal requirements.

Background

The department builds approximately 60 miles of road each year. If harvest levels stay the same in the 1990s as they were in the 1980s, the department estimates it will construct a total of 500-600 miles of road in the coming decade.

Comparison of Alternatives and Environmental Impacts

The **preferred policy** (current policy) meets applicable laws and safety standards. Public access benefits and environmental considerations are highest with this policy.

The department needs a good road system to execute the priorities of the plan and to generate income for the trusts. The extent of environmental impacts are generally tied to the number and type of roads built. Additional roads may lead to erosion and may encourage illegal dumping of garbage and other materials. The department attempts to keep road construction to a minimum.

Alternative 1 focuses primarily on economic benefits and providing more potential for revenue from the sale of timber products, such as minor forest product leases. Safety concerns will be met and miles of roads will be reduced. Public access needs are not considered.

Alternative 2 only serves short-term economic benefits such as timber sales. Safety standards will be met. This alternative will result in the least number of miles of road.

Alternative 3, the no-policy option, would follow existing rules and regulations and would likely lead the department to plan roads based on site-specific needs rather than rely on a comprehensive plan.

4.9 DISCUSSION OF RECREATION POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Policy No. 29: Recreation on State Forest Lands

The preferred policy states:

The department will allow recreation on state forest land when compatible with the objectives of the Forest Resource Plan. As part of its efforts, the department will continue to comply with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Two alternatives were considered by the department:

Alternative 1: The department will fully integrate within its long-range planning efforts an outdoor recreation program that is consistent with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). (current policy)

Alternative 2, the no-option alternative, would allow the department to develop a recreation policy on an ad hoc basis. New recreational sites would be purchased as opportunities presented themselves.

Background

The Multiple Use Act and the department's long-standing policy have opened up state forest land for public recreation.

Increasing problems with vandalism and destruction of trust assets have forced the department to consider new policies that would restrict public access in certain locations and situations. The department intends to evaluate carefully any new proposed recreation sites to ensure that they are compatible with other priorities (such as protection of wildlife and other natural resources) identified in the Forest Resource Plan.

Comparison of Alternatives and Environmental Impacts

The **preferred policy** would allow continued use of state forest lands for recreation, so long as these activities are consistent with other objectives, such as protection of trust assets. The department would seek new recreational opportunities, but it would also examine these proposals to make sure they are compatible with other objectives described in the Forest Resource Plan. (See Policy No. 25, for additional information.) This policy does not create specific environmental impacts. The impacts of specific recreation sites will be considered at the time they are submitted to the department for review.

Alternative 1 would require the department to provide recreational opportunities only when consistent with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which was prepared by the state Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation. It does not distinguish between the department's role as a trustee and its role as an owner of state forest land. The policy merges the two functions and creates some confusion within the department by implying the department's Forest Land Management Division is responsible for evaluating new recreation sites. That responsibility belongs to the Land and Water Conservation Division.

Alternative 2, the no-policy option, would give the department the authority to develop a recreation policy with the maximum amount of latitude, without considering either the SCORP or the Forest Resource Plan. Of the alternatives, it gives the most discretion to the department but also has the least predictability. It represents a significant change from prior practice.